

on board. It is this Chamber that is in a leadership role for the future. The entire Nation, if you look at it broadly, has really embraced America 2000. And now, we just need to get the message to the people up there on the Congress who work at the Hill and who have a lot to say about the funding that is necessary to see this program successfully concluded.

Not all of it depends, thank heavens, on Federal funding. You're where the action is, right at the community level. But we've got to get the message to 535 people who work down the street to think anew, to work with you in creating these brand-new, revolutionarily new schools. Together, I really believe that we're onto something here, that we will make our future proud

and bright.

And so thank you all very, very much for your commitment, for your leadership role, for laying aside the politics to think of the future of the kids in this greatest, freest nation on the face of the Earth.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.

Note: The President spoke at 8:55 a.m. at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to Edward Donley, chairman, Center for Workforce Preparation and Quality Education; David T. Kearns, Deputy Secretary of Education; C.J. (Pete) Silas, chairman, Richard L. Leshner, president, and William H. Lurton, vice-chairman, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Earvin (Magic) Johnson

January 14, 1992

Johnson's Role on AIDS Commission

Q. Mr. President, what kind of contribution do you think Magic Johnson can make in the AIDS battle?

The President. Well, it is my view that he can make an enormous contribution. He already has when you read the interviews and the reaction that he's having on the young people of this country for this very honest, compassionate, and sensitive view he's taken. It makes an impression on you. And he'll make a contribution on the Commission.

I wrote him a letter, a personal letter, some time ago and said that I recognize there are all kinds of opportunities now to serve mankind and that I'd love to have him on this Commission but he should feel free to say no if there were other priorities. And if he accepted that there would be no pressure, not that you could pressure a guy this size anyway—[laughter]—but no pressure to do anything other than do what the umpire does: Call them as they see them. And he's doing that. And he's out on his own around this country.

I think it's a wonderful thing, and I think

he's already having an effect on lifestyle, for one hand, and, on the other hand, this whole question of compassion and understanding for people that are afflicted by this. So, it's a two-way street as I see it. One is the education process, and the other is just because of who he is, his character. The way people look up to him in this country, he can probably make a better appeal for compassion and understanding for victims of this than any American. It's that simple.

AIDS Funding

Q. Mr. President, have you committed in your new budget to spend more on AIDS treatment and research?

The President. In anticipation of getting that question, I will point out the fact that we are spending \$4.25 billion total now. We are spending on research \$1.8 billion, which is more than we do on cancer, more than we do on heart disease. And we will do the utmost possible.

I have been in close touch with the people at NIH, and I expect, Magic, you'll be if you haven't: Dr. Fauci and Dr. Broder and some out there. And we will try to get

the maximum research funding level possible. They are not in the mode to tell me that the Federal Government has not come forward with a good level of funding. I mean, they've been quite positive about that. But if there's some place where you can put a little more money to get this problem solved, of course, we want to be sensitive to that.

Johnson's Role on AIDS Commission

Q. Mr. President, what sort of impression did Earvin's announcement have on you personally?

The President. Emotional. And of course, the Bush family are sports fans, and we've followed Magic. We've done it with great respect and admiration. But it's been not just that, not just a great athlete hit, but it's been the way he's handled it. It's been that that's had the real emotional effect. And people see this around the country. They really do. I'm not just saying it because I'm sitting next to this big guy; I'm just telling you that's the way they see it. They see it as here's a man that's got hit, and he's standing up and doing something about it and helping others. That's what this country's about.

Q. Did you have any hesitation yourself in joining this Commission?

Mr. Johnson. No. After I received President Bush's letter, I mean, first of all I felt honored, and I just wanted to learn a little bit about the Commission, what were my duties, what my responsibilities were before

I accepted. Once I found out what the Commission was all about, I was ready to jump in right away. You always want to help in any way you can, and this can only help the battle that I had already taken before that, my stand to try to help people.

Q. Do you have any suggestions for what the President might do to further help to fight AIDS?

Mr. Johnson. Well, the President and I are going to sit and talk.

The President. Talk about that.

Mr. Johnson. Maybe we'll let you know later. [Laughter]

Presidential Campaign

Q. Mr. President, what about the New Hampshire poll that showed a closer contest than before?

The President. I'm not going to talk about polls here today. I'll take care of that when the election rolls around. This is a nonpolitical event with a nonpolitical guy who's out there doing the Lord's work. So, I'd rather defer that until some more appropriate time. But thank you for inquiring.

Note: The exchange began at 1:50 p.m. prior to a meeting in the Oval Office. In his remarks, the President referred to Anthony S. Fauci, Associate Director for AIDS Research, and Samuel Broder, Director of the National Cancer Institute, at the National Institutes of Health. Professional basketball player Earvin (Magic) Johnson was a member of the National Commission on AIDS.

Remarks on the Presentation of a Natural Gas Powered Van and an Exchange With Reporters

January 14, 1992

The President. Let me just make a couple of brief statements. Last April, as part of the national energy strategy, I signed an Executive order that established goals for greater energy efficiency in the Federal Government, and that included the use of alternative fuel vehicles in the Federal fleet.

This van, driven over here and delivered by Secretaries Lujan and Watkins and then the able head of the GSA, Mr. Austin, uses compressed natural gas. And yesterday GSA announced that this year it will purchase from U.S. automakers 3,125 alternative fuel vehicles for use in the Federal fleet. This program demonstrates our continuing com-